DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 615 CS 508 789

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TITLE Television: A Communication Tool To Help Your Children.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Emotional Response; *Parent Role; Primary Education; *Television; *Television Viewing; Violence; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Television Literacy

ABSTRACT

Television has a pervasive presence in our lives and connects us to a larger world. Children spend more time watching television than any other activity (except sleeping). According to Bernard Percy, television can have a positive effect on children: it can build vocabulary, stimulate interests and motivate actions. Parents should consider doing some of the following: support successful educational programming in their child's school; encourage their child to watch imaginative programming; help their child be an active television viewer. After watching a program, they should discuss with their child what they liked to disliked about the show. They should discuss issues and ideas related to the program. On the other hand, television viewing can be quite damaging to children. The American Academy of Pediatrics says that "protracted television viewing is one cause of violent or aggressive behavior." Parents can limit the negative effects of television by setting a strong example for their children by choosing responsible programming. Also, parents should monitor programs viewed by their children and limit their children's viewing time. (TB)

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ED 378 615

Television: A Communication Tool to Help Your Children

Reed Markham

Television has a pervasive presence in our lives and connects us to a larger world. Children spend more time watching television than any other activity (except sleeping). 99% of Americans have at least one television set in their home. And it has been estimated that the average child graduates from high school having spent more time in front of a television set than in school.

According to Bernard Percy, author of HELP YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL, "Some of the positive claims are that television helps build the vocabulary of young children; that it can stimulate interests and motivate actions; that it can provide fine entertainment; that it can inform children in a unique and important way, and that it can help children develop positive attitudes, values, and comprehension."

Television can be a positive educational tool for your child if you keep in mind the following suggestions:

First, support successful educational programming in your child's school. Sean Hogue, Director of Development for Marks Cablevision in San Bernardino says "more and more classrooms are using television as a source

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of educational material for students." Marks Cablevision in conjunction with Turner Broadcasting offers local schools with a study program titled, "Turner's Adventure Learning Series." According to Hogue, the monthly series runs throughout the school year and provides students with study programs dealing with history and science.

Second, encourage your child to watch imaginative programming. According to Dorothy Singer, author of TEACHING TELEVISION, "children who have the capacity for fantasizing are better able to tolerate periods of delay, resist temptation, and develop strong defenses against the expression of anger and distress." Singer recommends programs like *Mister Rogers'* because it makes a "clear distinction between reality and a make-believe kingdom" and it stimulates creativity. Singer also found that cartoons have a positive impact on a child's creativity.

Third, help your child to be an active television viewer. After watching a program discuss what your child liked or disliked about the show. Discuss problems, issues and ideas related to the program. Vince Huntington, a marriage counselor in San Diego observed, "While watching a show have ever thought, 'We're just like that family,' or 'That's exactly how I feel'? That identification is one of TV's most powerful tools." You can improve your child's writing skills by having them take notes during a program or

following a program help them to write a letter to the producer.

Broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow wrote: "This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans ar determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise, it is merely lights and wires in a box."

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Television can have a positive influence on your child if you keep in mind the following:

1. List the values and beliefs that you want to pass on to your children. Use television to help teach your child these values.
2. Discuss with your child's teacher ways to use television as a learning tool.
3. Decide the when, where, what, why, and who, of television use in your home.

TOPIC: COMMUNICATION: THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF TELEVISION

BY: REED MARKHAM, PH.D

DATE: JANUARY 20,1995

In a Boston suburb, a nine year old boy nervously showed his father a report card that displayed several low grades. The boy suggested that they could solve this problem by giving his teacher a box of poisoned chocolates . "It's easy, Dad, they did it on television last week. A man wanted to kill his wife, so he gave her candy with poison in it and she didn't know who did it."

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that "protracted television viewing is one cause of violent or aggressive behavior." In addition to its ability to increase a child's aggressiveness, television has been associated with several learning problems. Melitta J. Cutright, author of THE NATIONAL PTA TALKS TO PARENTS found that "children who watch a lot of TV get lower grades, put less effort into schoolwork, have poorer reading skills, play less well with other children and have fewer hobbies and outside activities than do children who watch an hour or less of TV per day. Heavy watching has been linked to childhood obesity, since it keeps children from active play outside."

You can limit the negative effects of television in your child's life by:

First, setting a strong example for your child. Jean Dye, a television researcher for the PTA in Cleveland concluded, "Children learn by watching their parents. What will they learn as they see you watching TV? Are you addicted to soap operas? Do you look forward to Friday nights so you can turn on the tube and space out? Do you use the TV as background noise for your daily life?"

Second, monitor the programs viewed by your child. Sean Hogue, Director of Development for Marks Cablevision in San Bernardino says "its the parents responsibility to monitor what children watch at different age groups. It is important to watch television with your child." Albert J. Solnit, a psychiatrist at the Yale Child Studies Center observed: "You carefully choose your neighborhood, your child's school, his pediatrician. You monitor his teachers, coaches, friendships. Why should you pay any less attention to television? It bring the outside world into your child's life. It has a major impact on how he views the world."

Third, limit your child's television viewing time. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that you limit your child's viewing to two hours or less a day. According to Cutright, "once you decide on the number of hours to be watched, select with your child at the start of the week what shows

will be watched, and turn the TV on only for those shows. Set times when the TV must be off. For example, many household rules specify that there will be no TV during meals or until homework and instrument practice are finished."

Fourth, be selective. Children expect their parents to set the standards. Sit down with your child and review the television listing. Discuss the selection of some programs that are entertaining and others that are educational.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The California Academy of Family Physicians suggest trying a new approach to some old television programming with your child:

Twilight Zone - watch a sunset together with your child.

Good Morning America - have a relaxing breakfast together.

60 Minutes - meet your kids for lunch on a weekday.

Star Trek- go stargazing.

Beverly Hills 90210 - talk with your teenager about something you both like.